

Reproductive Facts

Patient fact sheet developed by the
American Society for Reproductive Medicine



Adoption: Where to Start and What to Consider

For many infertile couples, making the decision to adopt can be just as hard as undergoing fertility treatments. Some may choose to adopt in lieu of fertility treatments, while others may decide to adopt only after fertility treatments have not resulted in the birth of a child.

- There are several different roads to adoption. While some things are consistent for all types of adoption, each path also has different requirements and procedures as well. Gathering information is key to planning and preparing for the adoption process. Many states offer or require training sessions to help families learn about adoption and prepare for their adopted child(ren)'s needs.

Basic Facts about the Adoption Process

- Adoptions can be arranged through a private, county, or state agency, or they can be organized independently, either domestically (within the United States) or internationally (outside of the United States). Independent adoptions usually involve doctors, counselors, facilitators, and attorneys to make sure the process is done correctly and legally.
- Adoption laws are different from state to state and country to country. It is very important to know the laws for your particular adoption situation. If you decide to adopt a child from outside the United States, it is also important to understand the rules, policies, procedures, regulations, laws, and cultural issues for the specific country you are considering.
- Adoption costs vary widely. Public agency adoptions often cost less than private agency or independent adoptions. International adoptions have the added expenses of travel, as well as time away from home and work. Some employers provide adoption benefits for their employees, such as parental leave or adoption-cost assistance. Certain federal laws, such as the Family and Medical Leave Act, may also apply. Check with your Human Resources department.
- Adoption wait times can also vary significantly depending on where the child is from (international versus domestic), their race, and other individual characteristics (special needs, ethnicity, etc.).
- Although closed (confidential) adoptions used to be common, this is not the case today.

Many domestic adoptions are open adoptions. This means birth parents and adoptive parents share identifying information. This is different from international adoptions, where there is very little, if any, information available about the birth parents or the child's history.

Basic Facts about the Adoption Process

1. Consider the type of adoption arrangement that best suits your needs and wants. Some important things to consider include open versus closed adoption, agency versus private, country of origin, and specific characteristics of the child you want to adopt (gender, race, age, special needs). Gather information from agencies, attorneys, support programs, mental health professionals, and adoption organizations. Attend seminars and support groups that focus on adoption as a way to build a family.
2. Once you have decided how you want to adopt, contact an adoption agency to learn about their requirements and submit an application.
3. Most agencies will require a home study, which involves a visit to your home by a social worker to meet you and verify that you are able to care for a child. The social worker is there to help and support you and may offer guidance in getting your home ready for a child, as well as some valuable suggestions about the rest of the adoption process.
4. Much of the adoption process will vary depending on the type of adoption you choose and the adoption agency with whom you are working. One common thing you may encounter may be creating a personal profile and/or video to share your story with women looking to place their child up for adoption. You will also have to wait until you are matched with a mother, and this may include subsequent meet-and-greets to confirm if you are a good fit. The waiting part of the process can be very short or very long, up to many years, depending on numerous factors. If you are open to accepting many ages, races, and special needs,

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you may match more quickly with an adoptable child.

5. Once your child is placed with you, your adoption agency or attorney will help you file the necessary legal papers to finalize the arrangement. The amount of time you have to complete this process varies from situation to situation.

6. Most of all, all types of parenthood come with periods of adjustment, but do your best to enjoy being a parent with all its trials and tribulations and sleepless nights. It's also important to tell children about their adoption. There are many resources to help you share their birth story with them in age-appropriate and loving ways.

Remember, some infertile couples find it comforting to have an alternate plan, such as adoption, while others are not ready to explore this option yet. Do what feels right for you and your situation. If you decide to adopt after moving on from other options, give yourself time to grieve for what won't happen and then embrace what will. As with any way of creating a family, adoption is a lifetime commitment with lifelong challenges and rewards. No matter which type of adoption you decide to follow, you'll discover that adopting a child can be a very rewarding experience.

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